

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows.

1. (Currently Amended) An assembly for testing the settling characteristics of a fluid containing solid particles, said assembly comprising:

a container adapted to contain the fluid; and

a surface disposed within said container and adapted to urge the solid particles into a well as the solid particles settle within the fluid; wherein the well is non-centrally located within said container;

wherein in said container comprises a cup that includes a cylindrical wall and the assembly further comprises a cylinder disposed within said cup forming an annulus between said cylinder and said cup, wherein the well is accessible through the annulus.

2-5. (Cancelled)

6. (Currently Amended) ~~[[The]]~~An assembly for testing the settling characteristics of a fluid containing solid particles, said assembly ~~of claim 1 wherein said surface further comprising~~~~[[es]]~~:

a container adapted to contain the fluid; and

a surface disposed within said container and adapted to urge the solid particles into a well as the solid particles settle within the fluid; wherein the well is non-centrally located within said container, wherein the surface comprises:

a first surface curved about a first axis that is inclined toward the well; and

a second surface curved about a second axis that is inclined toward the well,

wherein said second surface is lower and steeper than said first surface.

7. (Original) The assembly of claim 6 further comprising a lip formed at the junction of said first and second surfaces.

8. (Currently Amended) ~~[[The]]~~An assembly for testing the settling characteristics of a fluid containing solid particles, said assembly~~of claim 1 comprising:~~

a container adapted to contain the fluid; and
a surface disposed within said container and adapted to urge the solid particles
into a well as the solid particles settle within the fluid; wherein the well is
non-centrally located within said container;
wherein said surface and said well are formed within an insert removably
disposed in said container.

9-12. (Cancelled)

13. (Currently Amended) ~~[[The]]~~ A testing assembly comprising:~~of claim 12~~
an insert disposed at the bottom of a cup containing a fluid having suspended
solid particles;
a well non-centrally located within said insert; and
an upper surface disposed on said insert and adapted to direct settling particles
toward said well, wherein said upper surface comprises a first curved
surface and a second curved surface,
wherein the second curved surface is lower and steeper than the first curved
surface.

14. (Currently Amended) ~~[[The]]~~ A testing assembly comprising:~~of claim 12~~
an insert disposed at the bottom of a cup containing a fluid having suspended
solid particles;
a well non-centrally located within said insert; and
an upper surface disposed on said insert and adapted to direct settling particles
toward said well, wherein said upper surface comprises a first curved
surface and a second curved surface,
wherein an intersection between the first and second surfaces forms a lip.

15-17. (Cancelled)

18. (Currently Amended) ~~[[The]]~~ A method for evaluating the settling characteristics of a
fluid containing solid particles, wherein said method ~~of claim 16 further~~
comprises~~[[ing]]~~:

disposing the fluid within a cup;
extracting a first sample of fluid from a well in a non-centrally located position
within the cup;
rotating a cylindrical body within the fluid for a selected time period;
extracting a second sample of fluid from the well, wherein the well is accessed
through an annulus formed between the rotating cylindrical body and the
cup; and
comparing a measured property of the second sample to a measured property of
the first sample.

19. (Original) The method of claim 18 further comprising:
returning the second sample to the well;
rotating the cylindrical body within the fluid for a selected time period;
extracting a third sample of fluid from the well; and
comparing a measured property of the third sample to the measured properties of
the second sample and the first sample.
20. (Original) The method of claim 19 wherein between the second sample and the third
sample the cylindrical body is rotated at a higher rate than between the first and
second sample.